

DISABILITY AND HEALTH

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Fifty-four million Americans are living with a functional limitation associated with a long-term physical, sensory, or cognitive condition. The annual economic cost associated with disabling conditions is an estimated \$300 billion. People with disabilities report higher rates of depression, anxiety, obesity, and acute pain in comparison to non-disabled persons. People with disabilities also report less access to healthcare compared to non-disabled populations.

CDC sponsors programs supporting the health, well-being, independence, productivity, and full societal participation of people with disabilities. These programs support research on risk factors for poor health and well-being; research on measures of health, functioning, and disability; data collection on the prevalence of disabilities and the health status of people with disabilities; health promotion interventions; and the implementation of public health policies related to disability and health. These initiatives also work to reduce the incidence and severity of secondary conditions such as pressure sores (decubitus ulcers), urinary tract infection, depression, and obesity.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- There are 16 states supported by CDC for various activities including disability surveillance, health promotion interventions, health education, and resource and policy development. The states awarded funding are Arkansas, California, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Vermont, and Washington.
- Extramural research projects have been implemented to increase the understanding of occurrence, risk/protective factors, costs associated with secondary conditions, and the impact of disability among special populations such as women, children, and racial/ethnic minorities.
- Three National Information Centers were awarded funds to provide comprehensive information and resource material to people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals. These centers include the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability, the National Limb Loss Information Center, and the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center.
- Conferences were supported to facilitate and stimulate dialogue; disseminate and exchange information; establish research and policy priorities; and outline and undertake next steps.
- CDC funded *Living Well with a Disability*, a community-based intervention which demonstrated that health promotion activities targeting people with disabilities not only improve health and wellness but also save money by reducing the frequency of medical visits.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- Continue to translate research findings into practice to improve the lives of people living with disabilities, including encouraging the implementation of the *Living Well with a Disability* program.
- Develop and disseminate health information to individuals with disabilities and their families.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

January 2004